



NEWS RELEASE

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Smoking Materials, Overloaded Fireplace Cause Fires in Tigard and Tualatin

A Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue fire investigator has determined the cause in two destructive fires that ripped through homes in Tigard and Tualatin Sunday afternoon and early Monday morning.

The first fire broke out in a garage in Tigard at 15960 SW Oakmeadow Lane at 2:17 p.m. Sunday afternoon. A passerby called 911 reporting smoke coming from the eaves of the home's garage. Firefighters from TVF&R's King City Station 35 and Tigard Station 51 arrived less than five minutes later to find heavy flames in the homes garage and most of the home charged with smoke. Firefighters quickly determined that no-one was home and knocked down the flames.

TVF&R Deputy Fire Marshal Edward Bonollo has determined that smoking materials that had been disposed of in a large plastic trash container in the home's garage caused the fire. The flames significantly damaged the garage and the rest of the house suffers from smoke damage. Bonollo estimates the fire caused \$30,000 in damage to the home.

"Careless smoking is the leading cause of fire fatalities in the communities we serve," says TVF&R Communications Officer Brian Barker, "we're glad no-one was hurt during this fire. We want to remind smokers to use extreme caution when disposing of cigarette butts. Use only a metal container or ashtray and never smoke in bed."

Twelve hours after the fire in Tigard, a resident at 9098 SW Raritan Court in Tualatin awoke to the smell of smoke at 2:36 a.m. and quickly evacuated her children from the home before calling 911. Firefighters from Tualatin's Station 34 happened to be in the neighborhood after responding to a medical call in the area and immediately responded to the address. The crew was on-scene and pulling hose to fight the fire less than 3 minutes after the resident called 911. Firefighters arrived to find flames coming from the roof of the home near the chimney. They quickly extinguished the flames and ventilated the home's roof to ensure that the fire did not spread throughout the attic space.

After a careful analysis of the scene, Bonollo concluded that a fire in an overloaded fireplace breached a metal fireplace insert and entered the wall space above the fireplace. Bonollo says the resident had loaded wood and cardboard into the fireplace early in the evening. By the time the family went to sleep that night, the fire had died down in the fireplace. Unbeknownst to the residents, however, the flames had entered the wall space above the fireplace and were working their way into the attic.

The fire caused \$40,000 in damage to the home and the residents will likely be unable to stay in the house for a period of months.

"Home fireplaces are safe as long as they're cleaned, inspected and not overloaded," says TVF&R's Brian Barker, "we suggest you inspect and clean your fireplace yearly."

When you use your fireplace use only enough fuel to keep the fire at the desired temperature. Avoid “roaring” fires. They can start chimney fire from soot and creosote deposits in the flue. Do not overload the fireplace. Large fires can lead to overheating of wall or roof materials, particularly if the fireplace is constructed of metal.